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Mozart's Don Giovanni.

BY THE EDITOR.

[First published in *Graham's Magazine* for Jan. 1852.]

This masterpiece of MOZART must always stand as the highest type of musical drama. Yet most persons who go to this famous opera for the first time, and look over the libretto, are disappointed in a worse sense than the travellers who complain of the first unimposing view of Niagara. It seems to them a waste of so much fine music, to couple it with a mere story of a desperate rake, (a young cavalier *estremamente licenzioso*, as he is set down in the list of characters), who after running a most extravagant career, is brought to judgment in a marvellous way; namely, by his inviting in jest the statue of an old man, whom he had murdered, the father of the noble lady he had sought to ruin, to sup with him, and by being surprised in the midst of his feast by the statue in good earnest, with the whole *posse comitatus* of the nether world rising to claim him! We are at a loss at first to account for the charm of so vulgar and grotesque a tissue

of absurdities. Yet there is a meaning in it that concerns us all.

Don Juan is one of the permanent traditional types of character; and Mozart's music, sympathetically, instinctively, rather than with any conscious philosophical purpose, brings out the essence of it. The gay gallant, magnetic disturber of every woman's peace that comes within his sphere, is not intended for that vulgar sensualist, that swaggering street-rake, that caricatures the part in most performances we may have seen. The true conception of Mozart's Don Juan is that of a gentleman, to say the least, and more than that, a man of genius; a being naturally full of glorious passion, large sympathies and irrepressible energies; noble in mind, in person, and in fortune; a large, imposing, generous, fascinating creature. Dramatically he is made a little more than human, yet in a purely human direction. He is such as we all are, "only more so," to borrow an expressive vulgarism. Remarkably is he such as Mozart himself was. He is a sort of ideal impersonation of two qualities, or springs of character, raised as it were to the highest power, projected into supernatural dimensions;—which is only the poet's and musician's way of truly recognizing the element of infinity in every passion of the human soul, since not one ever finds its perfect satisfaction. Mozart in his own life knew them too well, these two springs or sources of excitement! They are: (1.) the genial temperament, the exquisite zest of pleasure, the sensibility to every charm and harmony of sense, amounting to enthusiasm, and content with nothing short of ecstasy; that appetite for outward beauty, which lends such a voluptuous Titian coloring to his music. And (2.) as the highest mortal foretaste of celestial bliss, the sentiment of sexual Love,—that sentiment which is the key-note of every opera. In Mozart, music appears as the peculiar native language of these passions, these experiences. His music is all fond sensibility, pure tranquility of rapture, and most luxurious harmony of soul and sense. And therefore in him we have the finest development of the dramatic element in music. The two together make the genuine Giovanni creed,—the creed of Mozart and of Music,—the natural creed and religion of Joy. This free and perfect luxury of passion and fruition Mozart imagines, raised (as we have said) to the highest power, in the hero of the old tradition. His Don Juan is a grand believer in the passions

and in pleasure; he is the splendid champion and Titan of that side of the problem of life, a superb vindicator of the senses. He stands before us in the glorious recklessness of self-assertion and protest against the soul and passion-starving conventionality, the one-sided, frigid spiritualism of an artificial, priest-ridden, Mammon-worshipping society; opposing to these meshes of restraint his own intense consciousness of *being*, (with a blind instinct that it is good, divine at bottom, and only needing to appear in its own natural language of a Mozart's music to prove this); strong in the faith, against the world, that Joy, Joy is the true condition and true sign of life; but blindly seeking to realize this in the ecstatic lawlessness of Love, which necessarily involves sooner or later a proportional reaction of the outraged Law and Wisdom of the Universe.

Excessive love of pleasure, helped by a rare magnetism of character, and provoked by the suppressive moralism of the times, have engendered in him a reckless, roving, insatiable appetite, which each intrigue excites and disappoints, until the very passion, in which so many souls are first taught the feeling of the Infinite, becomes a fiend in his breast and drives him to a devilish love of power that exults over woman's ruin, or rather, that does not mind how many hearts and homes fall victims to his unqualified assertion of the everywhere rejected and snubbed faith in Passion. The buoyant impulse, generous and good in the first instance, goes on thus undoubtingly, defying bounds, till it becomes pure wilfulness, and the first flush of youth and nobleness is hardening to Satanic features. The beauty and loveliness of woman have lost to him now all their sacredness; they are mere fuel to the boundless ambition of a passion which knows no delight beyond the brief excitement of intrigue and sensual indulgence. He becomes the impersonation and supernatural genius of one of the holiest springs of human sentiment *perverted*, because *denied*; and he roams the earth a beautiful, terrible, resistless fallen angel, and victim after victim are quaffed up by his hot breath of all-devouring passion. And so he perseveres until Hell claims its own in the awful consummation of the supper scene. Art could not choose a theme more fraught with meaning and with interest.

The character of Don Juan, thus conceived, this splendid embodiment of the free, perfect, unmisgiving luxury of sense and passion, would

be no character at all, but only an absurdity, an impossibility in the spoken drama. There is no prose about it; nothing literal and sober; take away the exaltation, the rhythmical nature of it, and it falls entirely to the ground. Only Music could conceive and treat it; Music, which is the language of the ideal, innermost, *potential* life, and not of the actual life. But music equally does justice to both sides of the fact. In this triumphant career of passion, inasmuch as it is among men and laws and sympathies and social customs, a fearful retribution is foreshadowed. But not in *him*, not in this Titan of the senses, this projected imagination of unlimited enjoyment and communion. It is through the music that the shuddering presentiment continually creeps. Through music, which in acknowledging the error, in laying bare the fatal discord, at the same time symbolizes its resolution. Through music, in whose vocabulary sin and suffering and punishment are never final; in whose vivid coloring the great doom itself is but a vista into endless depths of harmony and peace and unexclusive bliss beyond.

The splendid sinner's end is rather melodramatic in the opera; and yet there is a poetic and a moral truth in it; and the spectre of the *Commendatore* is a creation fully up to SHAKESPEARE. No man ever literally came to that; but many have come to dread it. Beings, as we are, so full of energies and of exhaustless passionate promptings to all sorts of union and acquaintance with the rest of being; urged, just in proportion to the quantity of life in us, to seek most intimate relationship all round, materially and spiritually, we dread the mad excess of our own pent up forces. Surrounded by set formulae; denied free channels corresponding to our innate tendencies and callings; plagued by traditions, and chafed by some social discipline, in which the soul sees nothing it can understand, except it be the holy principle of Order in the abstract, do we not often start to see what radicalism lurks in every genuine spring of life or passion, in every thing spontaneous and loveable? Who, more than the pleasure-loving, sympathy-seeking, generous, childlike, glorious, imaginative, sensitive, ecstatic, sad Mozart, would be apt to shudder in dreams, in the night solitudes of his overworked and feverish and wakeful brain, before the colossal shadow of what possibly *he* might become through excess of the very qualities that made him diviner than common mortals? This allegory can certainly be traced through "Don Giovanni." The old governor, or Commander, whom he kills, personates the Law. The cold, relentless marble statue, that stalks with thundering foot-fall into the middle of his solitary orgies after him, is the stern embodiment of custom and convention, which he defies to the end and boldly grasps the proffered stony hand, from an impulse stronger than his terrors.

It is an old Middle Age, Catholic story. Under many forms it had been dramatized and poetized as a warning to sinners, before DA PONTE* found it so much to the purpose of Mozart, when he wanted to do his best in an opera composed expressly for his dear and own peculiar public

at Prague. Coarse as the story seems, perhaps the conflict between good and evil in the human soul was never represented in a better type. It was for Mozart's music to show that. That in adopting it for music he had any metaphysical idea at all about it, there is no need of supposing. His instinct found in it fine sphere for all his many moods of passion and of music. Here he could display all his universality of musical culture, and his Shakspearian universality of mind. Genius *does* its work first; the theory of it is what an appreciating philosophical observer must detect in it when done. "They builded better than they knew." Love, if it was the ruling sentiment of Mozart's nature, was for that very reason his chief danger. If it was almost his religion and taught his soul its own infinite capacity, so also seemed the danger therefrom infinite, raising presentiments and visions of some supernatural abyss of ruin, yawning to receive the gay superstructure of man's volatile enjoyments here in time. Life, power, love, pleasure, crime, futurity and judgment,—and a faith left beyond *that*!—what dream more natural, what circle of keys more obvious to modulation, to a soul, whose strings are all attuned to love and melody, whose genius is a powerful demon waiting on its will, and whose present destiny is cast here in a world so false and out of tune that, to so strong a nature, there seems no alternative besides wild excess upon the one hand, or a barren sublimity of self-denial on the other!

In this old legend the worldly and the supernatural pass most naturally into one another. Don Juan, gifted with all the physical and intellectual attributes of power, urged by aspirations blind but uncontainable, full of the feeling of *life*, and resolved to LIVE, if possible, so fully as to fill all with himself and never own a limit, (and this is only a perversion of the true desire to live in harmony with all,) finds the tempting shadow of the satisfaction in the love of woman; and the poor bird flutters charmed and trembling towards his fascinating glance. Imagine now the elegant, full-blooded, rich, accomplished and seductive gallant on his restless rout of pleasures and intrigues. At his side his faithful knave, droll Leporello, expostulating with his master very piously sometimes, yet bound to him by potent magnetism, both of metal and of character, (for passion like Giovanni's *will* be served.) Leporello is the foil and shadow to his master; and adds to the zest of his life-long intoxication by the blending of the comic with his exquisite wild fever of the blood. Throughout the whole he plays the part of contrast and brings all back to reality and earth again, lest the history should take too serious possession of us. He is the make-weight of common sense tossed into the lighter scale. He justifies its original title of "Don Giovanni, un dramma giocoso;" for this opera is tragedy and comedy and what you please, the same heterogeneous yet harmonious compound that life is itself. He on the one side gives a dash of charlatany to Don Juan, just as on the other side he borders on the supernatural. Mark the poetic balance and completeness here: this passion-life of Don Juan has its outward and its inward comment; on the one side, Leporello; on the other, the supernatural statue and the bodily influx of Hell. On the one side it is comic, grotesque and absurd; on the other, it is fearful. Seen in one light, he is a charlatan, a splendid joke; seen in the other, he is an unfolding demon and a type of doom; while in his life he is but the

free development of human passion in human circumstances. Man always walks between these two mirrors! One shows his shadow, as of destiny, projected, ever-widening, into the Infinite, where it grows vague and fearful. The other takes him in the act, and literally pins down all his high strivings and pretensions to such mere matter of fact, that he becomes ridiculous.

We come now to the Opera itself, which we can only examine very briefly and unequally, touching here and there. Were we to set about it thoroughly, our article would soon overflow all bounds, since there is not a scene, an air, a bit of recitative from the beginning to the end that would not challenge our most critical appreciation.

And first the overture, composed, they say, in the single night before the first public performance of the opera in Prague, his wife keeping him awake to his work by punch and anecdotes and fairy tales, that made him laugh till the tears ran down his cheeks; and only ready for the orchestra (which had not its equal in all Europe) to play at sight, without rehearsal. He may have *written* it that night, that is to say, have copied it out of his head. It was his habit of composition; his musical conceptions shaped themselves whole in his brain, and were carried about there for days until the convenient time to put them upon paper; and it is not possible that his brain that time could have been without an overture, since there the opera existed as a perfect whole, and in that glow and creative mood, the instrumental theme and preface to the same must have floated before him as naturally as the anticipation of his audience. Moreover the first movement of it, the andante, is essentially the same music with the grand and awful finale of the opera, and is properly put first in the overture (whose office it is to prepare the hearers' minds) as the grand end and moral of the piece. Accordingly it opens with three stern, startling crashes on the chord of D minor, the sub-bass dividing the measure into equal halves, but the upper parts syncopated; then a pause, and then the same repeated in the dominant;—like the announcement of a power not to be trifled with. Then a series of wild modulations, full of terror, enhanced by the unearthly brass and low reed tones, surging through chromatic intervals, which make the blood creep, and presently overtopped by a pleading melody of the first violins, while a low, feeble whimper of the second violins is heard all the time like the moaning of the wind about an old house. Then alternate sharp calls and low, tremulous pauses; the ground quakes; the din becomes more fearful; the melody begins to traverse up and down all kinds of scales, through intervals continually shifting and expressive of all manner of uncertainty, like the quick and fruitless runs in all directions of a beast surrounded by the hunters. It is like the breaking up of the familiar foundations of things, that unsettling of the musical scale!—all this is brief, for it is but a synopsis and foreshadowing of the last scene in the opera. The string instruments then dash off, in the major of the key, into a wild, reckless kind of allegro, than which there could not be a better musical correspondence of the general subject, that is, of the restless, mischievous career of one outraging all the social instincts and defying all pursuit. This spends itself at leisure, softening at the close toward the genial F natural, the key of nature and the senses, where the overture is merged into the dramatic introduction.

* "Don Giovanni" was composed in 1787. The Abbé da Ponte, who wrote the book, and who enjoyed at Vienna the same distinction with Metastasio as a writer of musical poetry, died in New York, in December 1838, at the age of ninety years, in a state of extreme destitution. For thirty years he had sought a living in that city by teaching the Italian language.

The curtain rises. Scene, a garden in Spain. Time, just before daybreak. Leporello, cloaked, with a lantern, paces watchfully to and fro before a noble villa, and sings with heavy bass of his drudgeries and dangers in the service of his graceless master; kindling half seriously at the thought, how fine a thing it would be to play the gallant and the gentleman himself. The light and exquisite accompaniment of the instruments meanwhile is like the softness of a summer night, and seems to count the moments of pleasure. The dreams of the valet are soon disturbed. Don Juan, his face hid by his mantle, rushes from the house, struggling from the grasp of Donna Anna, who, pale and dishevelled, clings to him convulsively, and seeks to detain and to discover the bold mysterious man, who has dared thus to invade her privacy and her honor. Her hurried and accusing melody, in these snatches of recitative, is full of a dignity and a pure and lofty fire that characterize alike her person and the whole music of her part. With drawn sword in one hand, and a torch in the other, her old father, the Commendatore (Commander of a religious order,) rushes out and challenges the bravo, who deals him a death-thrust. The startlingly vivid orchestral picture, which accompanies and as it were guides these sword-thrusts, is followed by a slow, mournful trio of bass voices, in which are gloomily contrasted the scornful triumph of Don Juan, the dying wail and warning of the old man, and the comic terror of Leporello. Nothing could be more thrillingly impressive; that music could mean nothing else but death stalking suddenly into the very midst of life! Then comes the passionate outpouring of the daughter's grief, and that inimitable scene of the most musical as well as most dramatic dialogue in the whole range of the lyric drama. It is the perfection of recitative. What exquisite tenderness and sincerity of sorrow in that violin figure which accompanies her inquiry for her father (*padre mio*) when she first recovers from her swoon! How sweet and comforting that fall of the seventh where Ottavio tells her: *Hai sposo e padre in me* (Thou hast husband and father in me)! And how fiery and grand the passage where she inspires the tame lover, with that sublimely solemn oath of revenge; and the hot, scouring blast of their swift and wonderful duet which follows it! In all this there is no delicate touch of feeling, no spiritual token of great purpose, possible to voice or instruments, omitted; no note omisable or of slight significance. Here is an opening of most pregnant import. One scene of moderate length has impressed us as by the power of fate to the seeing through of the profoundest drama of life. Here we have witnessed, as it were, the first reaction of the eternal Law, the first hint of destiny in this splendid libertine's thus far irresistible career. Already is this almost superhuman pleasure-hunt of genius past its climax, and the dread note of retribution is already sounded.

The next scene introduces us to one of the personified reproaches of Don Juan's better nature. As the Don and his man are plotting new adventures, a lady passes, in hat and feathers, with excited air, and, as they retreat into the shade to note her, she pours out her most musical complaint against the traitor who has played falsely with her heart. The introductory symphony or ritornel, in E flat major, by its bold and animated strain indicates the high-spirited and

passionate nature now before us, whose song of ever constant though wronged love, to words that would fain threaten terrible revenge, commences the Terzetto, mainly solo, to which the mocking by-play of the Don and Leporello, accompanied by a mocking figure of the instruments, supplies the other two parts. As he steps up to offer consolation to the lady, he recognizes his own simple, loving, poor deserted mistress, Donna Elvira; and while the same mocking instrumental figure leaves the song hanging in the air, as it were, without any cadence or any close, he slips away and leaves the task of explanation to the disconcerted servant. There is an ardent, passionate yearning in this as in all of Elvira's melodies, which climb high and are perhaps the most difficult in the opera. The character is seldom conceived truly by the actress. Interpreted by its music, its intention is distinct enough. Elvira is no half-crazed, foolish thing; but one of the highest moral elements in the *personnel* of the opera; next in dignity, at least, to Donna Anna. However she may appear in the libretto and in the common usage of the stage, Mozart in his music makes her the soul of ardent and devoted love and constancy, still fondly hoping in the deeper, better self of the man who has trifled with her; like a sweet genuine ray of sunshine always indicating to Don Juan a chance of escape from the dark labyrinthine fatality of crime in which he goes on involving himself; always offering him true love for false.

Let her not listen then, (like the silly girl we commonly see upon the stage, half magnetized out of a weak sorrow into a weaker involuntary yielding to the ludicrous) to the exquisitely comic appeal of Leporello, when the vain-glorious fellow unrolls his tremendous list of his master's conquests among the fair sex, enumerating the countries, ranks, styles of beauty, &c. The melody of this "Catalogue Song" is altogether surpassing. It is the perfection of *buffo*, as we have before had the perfection of serious recitative. After naming the numbers for Italy, Germany, &c., when it comes to the climax (Elvira's own land): *Ma in Spagna mille e tre* [But in Spain one thousand and three] it is ludicrously grave; the orchestra meanwhile has chopped the measure into short units, alternate instruments just touching different points of height and depth, till they seem at last to count it all up on the fingers, first downwards in the tripping *pizzicato* scale of the violins, then upward in gruff confirmation in the basses. In the slow time, where it comes to the specification of the different qualities of beauty, the *grande maestosa*, the *piccina*, &c., the melody is one of the most beautiful and pathetic that could be imagined. One wonders how Mozart could have expended such a wealth of melody upon so slight a theme; it seems as lavish a disproportion of means to end, as when we read of travellers roasting their eggs in the cinders of Vesuvius. But such was the musical fulness and integrity of Mozart; the genial vein, once opened, would run only pure gold; and his melodies and harmonies are not merely proportioned to the specialties of the subject, but are at every moment moulded in the style and spirit of the whole work. Besides, the comedy consists here in the contrast of a pathetic melody with a grotesque thought. Moreover the whole thing is truer in the fact, that not only Leporello's, but Don Juan's own melodies, as indeed the very nature of music, seem mournfully

to rebuke the desperado. In the most comic, and most bacchanalian strains, the music saddens with a certain vague presentiment of the fearful *denouement* of the drama.

The Don's next adventure is the meeting of a gay group of peasants at a wedding festival, where he attempts to seduce away the pretty bride, Zerlina, whose naïve and delicious songs, right out of a simple, good, loving heart, a little coquettish withal, are among the purest gems of the piece, and have mingled their melody with the civilized world's conceptions of truth and nature and the charm of innocence. Those of our readers, who have enjoyed with us the privilege of hearing and seeing a worthy, indeed a perfect personation of Zerlina, by that refined and charming artist, Signora Bosio, will need no words to give them a just conception of the character, and of its music which is as individual as that of Anna or Elvira. Suffice it to say, that the simplicity, the tenderness and the coquetry of this pretty peasant, have the natural refinement of a superior nature. Mozart must have been in love with the part. The rustic chorus opening this scene, in which the bridal pair lead off, is one of perfect simplicity, (Allegro, 6-8 time,) and yet inimitable beauty. The duet: *La ci darem la mano*, in which Don Juan overcomes the hesitation of the dazzled, spell-bound girl, breathes the undoubted warmth of passion; few simple souls could be proof against such an eloquent confession. Indeed the *sincerity* of all this music is a great part of its charm; it has never the slightest symptom of any striving for effect, and yet it is consummate art; it flows directly out of the characters and situations and the dramatic tendency of the whole. The poor girl is rescued this time by the entrance of an experienced guardian angel, who sees through the case at once. It is Donna Elvira, who just as she is tripping away with the fascinator to the gay, consenting tune of *andiam* (let us go,) snatches the bird from his hands. Her song of warning to the simple one: *Ah! Fuggi il traditor*, is a strangely elaborate Handelian aria, so different in style from the rest of the opera, that it is never performed. As if all things conspired to confound the traitor, Donna Anna and her lover also enter (Zerlina having withdrawn) and here ensues that wonderful quartet: *Non ti fida*, in which each voice-part is a character, a melody of a distinct genius, and all wrought into a perfect unity. Elvira warns Anna and Ottavio against confiding in this generous looking Don, whose aid they have unwittingly bespoken in their search for the murderer of the first scene (namely himself); Don Juan declares that she is crazy and not to be minded; the others are divided between pity for her and respect for such a gentleman; and all these strands are twisted into one of the finest concerted pieces in all opera. It is one of those peculiar triumphs of opera, which make it so much more dramatic than the spoken drama; for here you have four characters expressing themselves at once, with entire unity of effect, yet with the distinctest individuality. The music makes you instantly clairvoyant to the whole of them; you do not have to wait for one after the other to speak; there is a sort of song-transparency of all at once; the common chord of all their individualities is struck. Especially is this achieved in the concerted pieces, the quartets, trios, and so forth, of Mozart, which are beyond comparison

with most of those in the Italian opera of the day, since the harmony in them is not the mere coloring of one thought, but the interweaving of so many distinct individualities.

Zerlina is saved, but by arrangement with her protectors agrees to go up to the Don's palace, whither Leporello has conducted the whole wedding party and even coaxed along the jealous bridegroom. A scene ensues between Donna Anna and her lover. The orchestra in a few startling and almost discordant shrieks indicates the intense excitement of her mind, for, as Don Juan took his leave, she recognized the look and voice of one whom she had too much cause to remember; and in impassioned bursts of hurried recitative, alternating with the said spasmodic bits of instrumentation, she exclaims: *Quegli è il carnefice del mio padre* (This man is my father's murderer,) and in the same grandly lyric style, rising higher and higher, she tells Ottavio the story of her outrage. Having reached the climax, this magnificent recitative becomes melody and completes itself in the sublime aria: *Or tu sai*, "Now thou knowest who attempted my honor, &c." There can be nothing greater, more Minerva-like in dignity and high expression of the soul of Justice outraged, and at the same time full of all feminine tenderness and beauty, in the whole range of opera or drama. And it is music, it is Mozart that has done it all. We have here the character of Donna Anna in its most sublime expression, a character that transcends mere personal relations, that bears a certain mystical relationship with the higher power beginning to be felt in the development of this human history. In this song she rises, as it were, to the dignity of an impersonation of the moral principle in the play, and this high sentiment of her's is like a foretaste of the coming fate and supernatural grandeur, which are to form the never to be forgotten Finale of the piece. Elvira is entirely in the sphere of the personal; she loves Don Juan to the last, and like the simple good humanity that still appeals to him though still rejected. But Anna is superhuman and divine; she reveals the interworking of the Infinite in all these finite human affairs; to heaven, rather than to Ottavio, is her appeal; and from beyond this life look to see the vindicator of her cause appear. The loftiness of the music just considered, and the stately, trumpet tones of the orchestra, which always herald the entrance of Donna Anna and her party, connect her unmistakably with the marvellous elements of the drama; she is Feeling prophesying Justice; she is Faith in the form of woman; and the singer, who could perfectly present Donna Anna, would be worthy to sing Handel's song: "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

From one extreme we pass to its opposite. In strongest possible contrast with the high moral passion of this last is what now follows. We have a song embodying the very frenzied acme of Don Juan's zest of sensual pleasure. He directs Leporello about the feast and trolls off, like one possessed, his famous champagne song: *Finch'an del vino*, whose rapidity and glorious abandon are too much for almost all the baritones; those, in whose dragging utterance it does not become common-place, are apt to give it with a swaggering glibness and a coarseness that has nothing of the fine champagne enthusiasm about it. In this song and that last of Donna Anna's

the two electric poles, as it were, of the whole play, have met. And now for the pretty episode of peasant life again; the inimitably sweet, insinuating, loving song in which repentant little Zerlina seems to invite chastisement from her offended, jealous lover: *Batti, batti, O bell' Masetto*, (Beat me, beat me, dear Masetto)! With what soft tendrils of melody, enhanced by the delicious instrumentation, she steals around his senses and his heart! And to what unaffected rapture (to say nothing of a little coquettish triumph) the strain changes when he forgives her, as she knew he would! This seems a very simple song, but it is the perfection of Art. O that Mozart could go into ecstasies with his own pet Zerlina, hearing Bostro sing this!

(Conclusion next week.)

A MUSICAL REMINISCENCE.—An agreeable Paris correspondent of the Boston *Atlas* says:—The oft heard and ever admired *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, seems as new and gay as ever. Lazy Rossini's masterpiece, which has made the fortune of all the opera managers in the world—from San Francisco to St. Petersburg—would you know how much the great composer received for it? Four hundred dollars and room rent free! Here is the singular contract,—now published in English for the first time.

Nobil Teatro di Torre Argentina,
26 December, 1815.

By the present instrument, made privately between the parties, but which has none the less force and effect than a sealed instrument, and according to the agreements made between the contracting parties, it is stipulated as follows: If Signor Puccini Sforza Cesarini, manager of the said theatre, engages the Signor Maestro Gioachino Rossini for the ensuing season of Carnival, of the year 1816; the said Rossini promises and binds himself to compose and put on the stage, the second *buffo* play which shall be represented in the said season, in the aforesaid theatre, and upon the *libretto*, which shall be given him by the said manager whether this *libretto* be old or new; the Maestro Rossini binds himself to have his partition ready by the middle of the month of January, and to adapt it to the voices of the singers; further binding himself to make all, any, or every change which may be necessary, touching the good execution of the music, as well as talents and the desires of Messieurs the singers. The Maestro Rossini further promises and binds himself to be in Rome to fulfil his engagement not later than the end of December of the present year, and to give to the copyist the first act of his opera, perfectly complete, the 20th January, 1816; the 20th January is determined on, so that the rehearsals and the general rehearsals may be made at once, and that the opera shall be played whenever the Manager pleases, the first performance being at present appointed about the 5th February.—And further the Maestro Rossini must also give to the copyist in the full time, his second act, so that there shall be time enough for all rehearsals sufficient to perfect the work by the aforesaid evening; otherwise the said Maestro Rossini exposes himself to all damages which may ensue, because it should be so, and not otherwise. The Maestro Rossini shall further be obliged to direct his opera according to custom and personally to be present at all the rehearsals of singing and orchestra, whenever it should be necessary, either in the theatre or elsewhere, according to the good pleasure of the Manager; he further obliges himself to be present at the three first consecutive performances, and to direct at the piano the execution of them, and this because it should be so, and not otherwise. In recompense of his fatigues, the Manager binds himself to pay to the Maestro Rossini the sum and quantity *di scudi quatre cento romani*, (four hundred roman crowns,) so soon as the three first performances, which he must direct at the piano, shall have terminated. It is further agreed that in the case of interdiction or close of the theatre by the

authorities or any unforeseen contingency, the parties will conform to the usages which generally prevail in the theatres of Rome and of other countries, in the like cases. And to guarantee the full execution of this contract, it shall be signed by the Manager and the Maestro Gioachino Rossini; further the said Manager accords lodgings to the Maestro Rossini during the whole duration of this contract, in the same house assigned to the Signor Luigi Zamboni."

For Dwight's Journal of Music.

SPONTINI.

From the French of HECTOR BERLIOZ. (Continued.)

The *Vestale* could never have been performed, said they, without the numerous corrections which learned men condescended to make to this hideous score, in order to render it executable, etc., etc. Hence the laughable pretensions of many persons to the merit of having retouched, corrected, and purified this work of Spontini. I myself know of four composers who pass for having had a hand in it. When the success of *La Vestale* was well assured, irresistible, and incontestable, they went farther: it was no longer question of simple corrections, but of whole parts which each of the composers claimed to have composed for it; one pretended to have made the duo of the second act; another the funeral march in the third, etc. It is singular that in all the duos and marches of these illustrious masters none are to be found possessing the style and lofty inspiration of those of *La Vestale*. Can these gentlemen have pushed their devotion so far as to present Spontini with their finest ideas? Such an abnegation passes the limits of the sublime!—At last, according to the version long admitted into the musical limbo of France and Italy, Spontini had no hand whatever in the composition of *La Vestale*. Spontini was not even capable of producing this work, written in defiance of all good sense, corrected by every one, so crude and confused, and upon which scholastic and academic anathemas had so long been turned loose; he had bought it, already written, from a grocer, together with a mass of waste paper; it was from the pen of a German composer, who had died of misery in Paris, and Spontini had only to set the melodies of the unfortunate musician to the words of M. de Jouy, and to add a few measures in order to link the scenes well together. Such being the case, it must be confessed that he arranged them most skillfully—one would swear that every note was written for the word to which it is united. M. Castil-Blaze himself never surpassed this. It was frequently asked in vain, from what grocer Spontini had, sometime afterwards, purchased his score of *Fernand Cortez*, which we know not to be totally devoid of merit; no one could ever find out. How many persons there are to whom the address of this precious merchant would have been invaluable, and who would have hastened to provide themselves at his emporium. It must have been the same who sold to Gluck his score of *Orphée*, and to J. J. Rousseau his *Devin du village*. (The authorship of both these works, of merit so disproportionate, has also been contested.)

But a trace to these incredible follies! No one doubts but that envy is able to produce in the wretch whom it devours, a state bordering upon imbecility.

Master of a position disputed with so much obstinacy and now confident in his own strength, Spontini prepared to undertake another composi-

tion in the antique style. He was about to take *Electre*, when the emperor gave him to understand that he should be pleased to have him take as a subject for his new work, the conquest of Mexico by Fernando Cortez. This order the composer hastened to obey. Nevertheless the tragedy of *Electre* had deeply moved him: to set it to music was one of his most cherished projects, and I have often heard him regret that he abandoned it.

I believe, however, that the choice of the Emperor was a great piece of luck for the author of *La Vestale*, because it obliged him a second time to abandon the antique, and seek scenes quite as moving, though more varied and less solemn; to seek that strange and charming coloring, that proud and tender expression, and that happy hardness, which render the score of Cortez the worthy companion of its elder sister. The success of the new opera was triumphal. From that day Spontini ruled, lord over our first lyric stage, and could have exclaimed in the words of his hero:

"Cette terre est à moi, je ne la quitte plus!"

I have often been asked which of the two operas of Spontini I preferred; and have always found it impossible to reply to that question. Cortez only resembles the *Vestale* in the fidelity and constant beauty of its expression. As to the other qualities of its style, they are entirely different from that of its sister. But the scene of the revolt of soldiers in Cortez is one of those miracles almost impossible to find in the one thousand and one operas written up to this time; a miracle which I fear can only be matched by the final of the second act of *La Vestale*. In the score of Cortez all is energetic and proud, passionate, brilliant, and graceful; inspiration blazes and overflows, yet it yields to the direction of reason. All the characters are of an incontestable truth. Amazingly tender and devoted; Cortez, passionate and impetuous, yet sometimes tender; Velasco, sombre, but noble in his savage patriotism. We find therein great eagle swoops, and lightning-flashes sufficient to illumine a world.

One year after the appearance of *Fernand Cortez*, Spontini was chosen director of the Théâtre Italien. He collected an excellent troupe, and to him the Parisians are indebted for the pleasure of having witnessed for the first time the *Don Giovanni* of Mozart. The parts were distributed as follows:

DON GIOVANNI,.....Tucchinardi.
LEFONTELLO,.....Barilli.
MASETO,.....Porto.
OTTAVIO,.....Civelli.
DONNA ANNA,.....Mme. Festa.
ZERLINA,.....Barilli.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the eminent services which Spontini rendered to art, during his direction of the Italian Opera, an intrigue, of which money was the nerve, soon obliged him to abandon it. Paër, moreover, director at the same time of the Court Opera, and little delighted at his rival's success upon the last stage of the Grand Opera, endeavored to disparage him, called him renegade by gallicizing his name *Mr. Spontin*, and frequently caused him to fall into those snares which the Signor Astucio was so skillful in spreading.

Now at liberty, Spontini wrote an *opera de circonstance*, entitled *Pélagie, ou le Roi de la Paix*, long since forgotten; then, an *opéra ballet*, *Les Dieux Rivaux*, in collaboration with Persuis, Ber-ton, and Kreutzer. At the revival of *Les Dana-*

ides, Salieri, too old to quit Vienna, entrusted Spontini with directing the study of his work, authorising him to make all changes and alterations which he might deem necessary. Spontini merely retouched in his compatriot's score, the finale of the air of Hypermnestre: "*Par les larmes dont votre fille,*" by adding a *coda* full of dramatic enthusiasm. But he composed several delicious dancing airs, and a *bacchanale* which will ever remain a model of burning animation, and the type of the expression of sombre and disordered joy.

To these various works succeeded *Olympie*, a grand-opera in three acts. Neither at its first appearance, nor at its revival in 1827 did it obtain the success which I think due to it. Different causes concurred fortuitously to arrest its flight. Politics declared open war against it. The Abbé Grégoire was then in every mouth. There was thought to be discovered a premeditated intention of making allusion to this celebrated regicide in the scene of *Olympie* where Statira exclaims:

Je dénonce à la terre
Et voue à la colère
L'assassin de son roi.

From that time the liberal party evinced a great degree of hostility towards the new work. The assassination of the Duke de Berry, having caused a little while after the theatre of the Rue de Richelieu to be closed, interrupted the course of the representations, by violently turning the public attention from questions of art, and gave a last blow to the success which was struggling so hard to establish itself. When, eight years later, *Olympie* was again brought forward, Spontini, chosen in the interval director of music to the king of Prussia, found, on his return from Berlin, a great change in the tastes and ideas of the Parisians. Rossini, powerfully sustained by M. de la Rochefoucauld and by the entire direction of the Beaux Arts, had just arrived from Italy. The sect of pure dilettanti went delirious at the mere name of the author of the *Barbier*, and most unmercifully tore to pieces every other composer. The music of *Olympie* was considered sing-song, and M. de la Rochefoucauld refused to prolong for several weeks the engagement of Madame Branchu, who alone was able to sustain the part of Statira, which she played only at the first performance, for her farewell benefit,—and there was the end of it. Spontini, his soul ulcerated by other acts of hostility too long to mention here, set out for Berlin, where his position was, in every respect, worthy both of himself and of the sovereign, who was capable of appreciating him.

On his return from Prussia, he wrote for the court festivals, an opera-ballet, entitled, *Nurmakal*, the subject of which is borrowed from Moore's *Lalla Rookh*. To this graceful score he added his terrible *bacchanale* of *les Danaïdes*, having developed it and enriched it with a chorus. Afterward he re-wrote the last act of *Cortez*. I saw in Berlin this new denouement, which they did not deign to receive at the opera in Paris, at the revival of *Cortez*, six or seven years later. It is magnificent, and much superior to that known in France. In 1825 Spontini produced in Berlin a fairy-opera, *Alcidor*, which the enemies of the author ridiculed exceedingly, on account of its instrumental noise, said they, and also of an orchestra of anvils which he had made to accompany a chorus of blacksmiths. This opera is entirely unknown to me. I have been able, however, to indemnify myself by perusing the score of *Agnès de*

Hohenstaufen, which succeeded *Alcidor*, twelve years later. This subject, called the *Romantic*, was of a style entirely different from those employed by Spontini up to that time. He has introduced therein for the *morceaux d'ensemble* some very curious and arduous combinations; such, among others, as that of an orchestral storm, executed while five persons sing a quintet upon the stage, and while a chorus of nuns is heard in the distance, accompanied by sounds imitating those of an organ. In this scene, the organ is imitated so as to produce the most complete illusion, by a small number of wind instruments and bass-voils, placed behind the scenes. Now-a-days, organs being found as frequently in the theatre as in the church, this imitation, interesting on account of the difficulty overcome, seems useless.

To close the list of the productions of Spontini, I must mention his *Chant du peuple Prussien*, and various compositions destined for military bands.

The new king Frederick William IV. has preserved the traditions of generosity and benevolence of his predecessor towards Spontini; notwithstanding the unfortunate *éclat* of a letter, doubtless imprudent, written by the artist, and which drew upon him a judgment and a condemnation. The king not only pardoned him, but allowed Spontini to settle in France, when his nomination to the Institute obliged him to remain there, and gave him an evident proof of his affection by permitting him to retain his title and salary of chapel-master to the court of Prussia, although he had renounced the fulfilment of his functions. Spontini was induced to seek repose and academic leisure, first by the persecutions and hostilities heaped up against him at Berlin; and afterwards by a strange disease of the ear, the cruel effects of which he suffered at intervals during a long space of time. During the periods of the perturbation of an organ which he had exercised to such an extent, his sense of hearing was almost extinct; yet every isolated sound which he perceived seemed to him an accumulation of discord. Hence an absolute impossibility for him to bear any music, and the obligation to renounce it, until his morbid period had passed away.

[Conclusion next week.]

THE VOICE.—The organ of voice or larynx, has been compared to a clarinet, and similar instruments. It is composed of a mouth-piece, the aperture of which admits of expansion or dilation, and of a tube, which is capable of being lengthened or shortened. The tube is situated upon the superior part of the trachea, so that, as the air passes out during expiration, it may cause the edges of the aperture, at the entrance of the larynx from the mouth, to vibrate. If the upper part of the trachea be divided, on looking into the larynx from below, the tube, from being cylindrical, is seen to assume abruptly a triangular prismatic form. The two long sides of the triangle extend horizontally inwards and forwards, to meet at the front of the larynx. The base of the triangular opening is short, and is placed transversely. The mouth or orifice of the larynx is called the *rima glottidis*; the two long edges that meet at its fore part are termed the *chordæ vocales*. On looking into the larynx from above, the epiglottis is seen. It consists of a thin flap of fibrous cartilage, held vertically by its elastic connections against the root of the tongue, but capable of being thrown down to cover the opening of the glottis, the lips of the glottis, or the reflection of the mucous membrane, from the edges of the epiglottis to the posterior margin of the larynx, and the *ventriculus laryngis*, as the shallow fossa is called, placed immediately above and to the outside of the *chordæ vocales*, which permits these parts to

vibrate freely. The rima glottidis is the mouth-piece of the larynx, and corresponds in some measure with the reed of the clarinet, or with the lips of a person whilst playing the flute. In pursuing the same comparison, we observe a contrivance similar to the stops in these instruments by which the tube may be shortened or lengthened, in the alternate rising and falling of the larynx. When the larynx is raised, the vocal tube is shortened; when it is depressed, the tube is lengthened. Accordingly, when an acute note is uttered, the larynx is felt to rise, and to sink when the voice falls to a grave tone.—*Curtis on the Deaf and Dumb.*

PORPORA.—In the time of Charles the Sixth, the celebrated Porpora lived at Vienna, poor and unemployed. His music did not please the imperial connoisseur, as being too full of *trills* and *mordenti*. Hasse wrote an oratorio for the emperor, who asked him for a second. He entreated his majesty to permit Porpora to compose it. The emperor at first refused, saying that he did not like that capering style; but touched with Hasse's generosity, he at length complied with his request. Porpora, having received a hint from his friend, did not introduce a single trill in the whole oratorio. The emperor, surprised, continually repeated during the rehearsal—"Tis quite a different thing,—there are no trills here." But when they came to the fugue which concluded the sacred composition, he observed that the theme commenced with four trilled notes. Now every body knows that in fugues the subject passes from one part to another, but does not change. When the emperor, who never laughed, heard in the full height of the fugue this deluge of trills, which seemed like the music of crazy people in a play, he could no longer preserve his gravity, and laughed outright, perhaps for the first time in his life. In France, the land of jokes, this might have appeared out of place; but at Vienna it was the commencement of Porpora's fortune.

Dwight's Journal of Music.

BOSTON, MAY 14, 1853.

"DON GIOVANNI." As rumor indicates a prospect of our hearing Mozart's masterpiece, next week, presented by the Sontag troupe, reinforced with several new singers, we have thought to prepare some of the opera-goers for a juster understanding of the work, and to remove some common prejudices, by transferring to these pages a lecture, in which we embodied several years ago our own impressions, speculations and results of readings on the subject. The article is long, so that we divide it in the middle, promising the remaining half next week. It grew into its present shape and dimensions, by successive accretions and revisions, made from year to year, since the time that our first very imperfect acquaintance with the work inspired us with the deepest interest. Whatever "Don Juan" may be to the lovers of more modern music, or to mere moral critics of the libretto, who reject the *subject* beforehand, without considering in what spirit it is treated, to us it is full of meaning and one of the worthiest themes of study in the whole world of Art. No doubt, our feeling about it will to many seem extravagant, subjective, fanciful and transcendental. Yet we attribute to it not a particle *more* meaning than do all the many writers on the subject among Mozart's own countrymen, although our own view may not coincide entirely with any one of them. Certain we are that all these come necessarily nearer to the thought and

true design of Mozart, than the literal, superficial view which sees in "Don Giovanni" nothing but a vulgar, grotesque, licentious, half comical, half tragical melodrama, with a vast deal of musical talent thrown away upon it. We believe no one will ever worthily appreciate or enjoy the work who looks upon it in that light.

While writing out these speculations in their present form for *Graham's Magazine*, a year or two since, we came across the admirable work on Mozart, by the Russian writer, Oulibicheff, and from his minute analysis enriched the detail of our description of the opera itself in several places, although his interpretation as a whole was not entirely reconcilable with our own pre-conceived idea of it. This we mention, because there treacherously appeared in "Graham," soon after our article, a malignant and ill-natured *anonymous* attack upon it, calling it not only "extravagant," "immoral," "transcendental," and "very Boston," but "*plagiarized*," especially from the German writer Hoffmann. Of this attack we never took the slightest notice,—not so much as to inquire the authorship: first, because we were too busy, having our hands full with the preparation and launching of this Journal, and, having said our say about "Don Juan," we were in no mood for controversy about it; secondly, because the attack was of too vulgar and flippant a character to render any notice except that of silence proper; and thirdly, because the only serious charge, that of passing off Hoffmann's writing for our own, professed to substantiate itself by adducing parallel passages, which we could safely leave to the common sense of any intelligent reader as anything but parallel in meaning; while at the same time it upset itself by the incompatible charge of perverting and altering the sense of Hoffmann. The only answer we have ever thought of making to this attack, we make now, having postponed it until a public performance of "Don Juan" should make our readers interested in the discussion of it. We simply republish, what we wrote, for better or worse (and our readers will see it lays no claim to originality, while it would have been wholly wrong to make Hoffmann or anybody else responsible for it as a whole), and design to follow it by as faithful a translation as we can procure of Hoffmann's article entire. Then who-soever cares enough to make the comparison, may do it for himself; and we shall be killing two birds with one stone; first, ridding ourselves of this shadow of an obligation to the past, and secondly helping (as we trust) to interest our readers and opera-goers more deeply and more worthily in one of the greatest monuments of lyric Art.

New York Normal Musical Institute.

This novel enterprise commenced its active existence, according to the announcement which has stood for some time in our advertising columns, at nine o'clock on Monday morning, April 25th. The ground was broken in an introductory lecture by Mr. LOWELL MASON, who had only a few days before arrived from Europe, and who may be considered as the father of the plan, as well as of the whole movement of popular musical instruction in this country. Among psalm-book makers and mass teachers there is no one like him; and the Normal Institute is probably to be regarded as his crowning effort, to concentrate and build up into some distinct form of permanency the results and methods of his extensive

and in many respects original experience as a pioneer in choirs and public schools throughout our once unmusical New England.

We understand that about fifty pupils of both sexes appeared at the opening, designing to attend the classes and enjoy the privileges of the institution, through its session of three months. The scene of operations is Dodworth's large and beautiful Hall in the building upon Broadway next Grace Church. The class exercises occupy the hours from nine to one each morning. Mr. MASON lectures from 9 till 10 on the Art of Teaching; Mr. R. STORRS WILLIS from 10 till 11 (Tuesdays and Thursdays) on Harmony and Composition; Mr. G. F. ROOT from 11 till 12 on the Culture of the Voice; and Mr. W. B. BRADBURY from 12 till 1 on Part-Singing. Besides these, Mr. THOMAS HASTINGS, (author of a treatise just published upon "Musical Taste"), communicates "sound and experienced views as to the *side-culture*—mental and physical—of the musician." Private lessons in singing are given by Dr. BEAMES; and those who wish instruction in the use of instruments can be taught the organ by Mr. HOWE, and all sorts of band instruments by Mr. DODWORTH.

The original and distinctive feature of the Normal Institute is that it teaches the art of teaching. Its primary end is not, like that of the European Conservatories to train *artists* but rather to raise up and qualify *teachers* of the first elements of music for the masses, so that the whole rising generation of American society may grow up in some actual possession of the musical faculties implanted in our common nature. This certainly is a most worthy end; and to its speedier and truer realization the Normal School, or nursery of teachers, is as necessary to the popular musical culture as it has been found to be to our whole general system of Free Schools, so indispensable to a Republican society. It would be hardly reasonable to look to such an institution (at least in the outset) for the ripe artistic culture of the Conservatories in France and Germany, which are presided over by the greatest artists, composers and theoretic professors of the age. Probably our time has not yet come for that. But meanwhile here is a great and important work demanded by the times; and for its accomplishment, or for the first successful trial of the way thereto, we look with no small hope to the school so auspiciously commenced in New York.

A people must owe its musical culture to two main sources: first and principally, no doubt, to the inspiring influence of Art itself, to the presence of true artists and the frequent hearing and enjoying of true works of Art. Handel and Mozart and Beethoven and Mendelssohn, with fit interpreters, are of course our best educators. But there is also need of systematic, elementary teaching. The eye must be educated, to learn the whole lesson of beauty from nature or from Raphael. And the ear must be taught how to discriminate shades of tone, before the Mozarts can come home to us. Now it is notorious that musical artists, fine composers, men of genius, hate the drudgery of teaching. It needs to be proved and practically illustrated that teaching itself, even of the simplest rudiments, may be made an *art*; so that if any have an inborn talent for it they may find it as attractive and as enlivening an employment as the creation of poems, songs or pictures. Perhaps this Institute may do something to present the teacher's function in a more worthy and attractive aspect, to artists who in this country have to live by teaching, as well as by the practice of their art.

The Normal Institute may be regarded as the ultimate consolidation of those summer "Musical Conventions," which for many years have so stimulated the popular interest in music. It offers the best benefits, without the hurry and the crudities of the Conventions. The pupils remain together three months, in the company of those earnestly pursuing the same end with themselves, in a musical metropolis,

where there are multitudes of opportunities of hearing such good music as they might never hear at home; and where they are likely to be thrown much in the way of artists and enter circles that are pervaded by an artistic tone: so that, besides learning the mere rudiments and how to teach them, those who are apt for it may possibly receive some deeper notions of artistic culture, and even unfold some germs of a creative talent as composers. Such a school, if liberally and wisely managed, might draw in more or less the aid of all the most accomplished musical teachers and musicians residing in or visiting the city. We see not why such a movement may not gradually grow and ripen into something quite as formidable as a Paris or a Leipzig Conservatory, while it should still retain its distinctive feature of the Normal School, or school for teachers. We shall be glad to receive reports from time to time of its progress.

SINGERS AND THEIR PRICES.—We think there is a great deal of justice in the following strong remarks of the N. Y. *Tribune*, apropos to the benefit given last week to manager Le Grand Smith, who has come off a loser by his liberality in the "Grand Combination (Maretzek-Alboni) Opera," simply on account of the exorbitant demands of the principal singers. That a reformation is surely needed is most certain—but how shall it be brought about, in a thoroughly competitive system of society? is the grand question. One would think, however, that the singers themselves might be taught to see their own interest to coincide with that of the music-loving public, in placing opera upon a permanent, regular and wholesome basis. Surely it were better for them all to be secured regular employment on good salaries, than to take such lottery chances as they now do, in brief seasons of excitement, which recklessly consume the soil, end disastrously for the managers, and destroy all hope of opera again perhaps until some new flaming meteor comes along and galvanizes the thing again into an equally baleful existence for a few weeks. But here is the extract. We say Amen to it all, except the coupling of the true artist name of Jenny Lind with "quackery and pharasaic parade."

We deem it creditable to Mr. Le Grand Smith and equally discreditable to the company he employs, that he should have lost money. It seems to us that in the illustration of Operatic art, which will here and now afford a reasonable recompense to all the performers, it borders on the morally hideous and religiously atheistic, that artists can be found whose sense of salary so far outweighs their sense of justice that they will see any worthy gentleman deliberately pay out more than they can draw into the house.

As much as we desire to see lyrical art flourish in the country, we would sooner a thousand times see it blasted from existence and consigned to oblivion, than to find it habitually connected with avarice, jealousies, quarrelings, and the bankruptcies of the high-minded and liberal. And if, in the maelstrom of trade, the public could arrive at an anchorage of ethical observation, they would see the necessity of setting the seal of terrible reprobation upon all grasping cupidity, and the quackery and pharasaic parade of a Jenny Lind crusade would never be repeated. The difficulties of Mr. Le Grand Smith arise simply from the fact that operatic art is not systematized with us. There is no combination among capitalists to set it in regular motion. There is no religious feeling among artists to save it from habitual wreck. The idea that the generous gifts of God may be rewarded by something else than gold in excess never appears to be felt on the operatic stage.

The divine fire which made Correggio devote himself to a single portrait for years, and be paid in pennies; the equally sacred enthusiasm that doomed Mozart to such a life of poverty that, at the time he was writing his Don Giovanni, he was arrested for a debt of five dollars—has no more existence than if human nature in creative genius was a different thing from the same quality in performing talent. The profanity of paying four, five, or six hundred or more dollars a night for a single

voice, is submitted to by the public, who, if dignity were as pervasive as folly, would fully assert the claims of justice, and see that a right division of rewards was determined. They would even find out that at least one-half of the success of an opera depends upon the composer, and would not let singers prey upon his works without giving him the rights of authorship under an international law of Copyright.

We think the duty of this public is to support Mr. Le Grand Smith. We think that they should force the artists under him to come to reasonable terms, or not let them sing at all. We can never have any art in this country so long as crazy cupidity fires every artist, based on the Jenny Lind auctioneering, charity-giving, angelic charlatanism. Singers should be paid here as they are in Italy, so much per cent. only added for the voyage, and the public should refuse to give more; otherwise art can have epileptic spasms, but no continuous growth for the benefit even of the artists themselves.

ITALIAN OPERA. Night after night in the performances of the Sontag troupe, we feel how much pleasure may be given, even with limited means, when there is a presiding intelligence and good taste to lend character and unity to each performance as a whole. This has been the secret of the charm. As the centre and mainspring of the whole has been one of the world's most refined and thoughtful artists, who is always and thoroughly a lady, and who impresses her own artistic feeling and conception upon the whole drama that is moving and singing around her. The *Lucia*, which we did hear the second time, depends more than any opera almost on a robust, manly tenor; and here the tenor was light and feeble. Almost all the tenors we have ever heard have been sentimental, lacrimose, effeminate and overstrained. When shall we ever hear a tenor? Bettini's was manly, rich in volume, golden in quality, and he often carried the house by storm, but he relied too much on special outbursts, in the climaxes of passion, while all the rest was indifferent. Benedetti should have been, had it in him to be a great tenor, and there was a certain manly weight and dignity (not merely physical), a magnetism of genius in his Edgardo,—the first we ever heard—which still remains to us an ideal of the part to the disadvantage of his successors. But Benedetti abused his voice, and relied on native talent, without being in any thorough sense a musician. Pozzolini is not a man of weight enough for Edgardo. Yet the opera, as a whole, was better performed than we have ever heard it. Sontag's Lucia for the first time realized in some sense our ideal of the character. Her first appearance was wonderfully youthful, beautiful and maiden-like; we could not believe it was the Countess Rossi; and her singing and acting throughout, especially in the mad scene, were exquisite in conception, style and finish.

Maria di Rohan, as music, seems to belong to the bed-ridden period of Donizetti's creative faculty; but as a play it is intensely, terribly dramatic, with dread catastrophes foreshadowed, the hands of a clock creeping visibly toward the fatal twelve, duels impossible to prevent, manly friendship transformed into jealous fury, &c., &c.;—only the plot is too complicated and does not fully explain itself to the spectator. It was finely performed, especially by SONTAG, and by BADIALI, save that the latter rather overdid the furious frenzy of Chevreuse's jealousy in the last act; yet it was truly a magnificent display of power. Pozzolini sang and acted the part of Chalais with uncommon vigor, substituting for the confession of his love in the first scene the corresponding solo out of *Il Giuramento*, and with good effect. Pico's Armando di Gondi, (in which part there is some of the freshest and most piquant melody) was her best part thus far. But we are not partial to these intensely passionate, overstrained, tragical, loud, brassy operas. We like the exagérations of humor better than those of serious passion.

Hence it was refreshing to come to the pretty, sparkling comedy of the *Elisir d'Amore*. Of course Mme. Sontag was perfectly felicitous in the charming little rustic coquette of an Adina; but she is too lady-like a rustic for such a perfect simpleton of a lover as that clownish Nemorino, the music of whose part by the way was just suited to the tenor

of POZZOLINI. Rocco's Dr. Dulcamara was not quite imposing enough for such a mighty quack; its humor was too much like boy's play; and the real zest of the comedy did not begin to be felt before the barcarolle between him and Adina at the end of the second act. BADIALI, in the bully, gallant sergeant, Belcore, maintained the most military *déplomb*, and was as satisfactorily Badiali as the small part admitted.

☞ We request the attention of our Boston readers to the advertisement of Mr. KEYZER's Musical Soirée. We hope that after an absence of six years, he will find that his many friends have not forgotten his good services in those memorable concerts of the old Boston Academy. The artistic spirit shown in a Chamber Concert, which he gave us at that time, shortly before his removal to New York, will be remembered as a pledge of something true and genuine in whatever he may announce of the same sort now.

The pieces selected are, we understand, all of the highest classical order. Among others, Spohr's celebrated *double Quartet* will be heard for the first time in Boston. Also Mr. Lange will perform one of the choicest compositions of Chopin.

London.

ROYAL ITALIAN OPERA. (From the *Chronicle* of April 22.) Last night Grisi returned, in *Norma*, looking as well, acting as nobly, and singing as gloriously as ever. The house—the most crowded and brilliant of the season—welcomed the great *prima donna* with a succession of those long-continued bursts of greeting which few, save Madame Grisi, can evoke; and then there went round a universal buzz of satisfaction to the effect that "The Diva" looked younger, and that her figure had improved in slowness of symmetry since last season. The opening notes which Madame Grisi sang, so pure, so sonorous, so sympathetic in its tone, so noble in its volume—stole on all hearers in its wonted freshness and power. * * * As she went on, her voice became, if possible, more and more rich, and more and more flexible, and her whole performance was one long triumph.

We have now obtained an *Adelgisa* superior, we think we may say, to any of the representatives of the character at the Royal Italian Opera since CERRARI. Mlle. BELLINI, who, the other night, took firmer ground than she had previously occupied—as *Jenny* in *William Tell*—made another and more decided advance still in *Adelgisa*.

TAMBERLIK was in excellent voice, and made a most artistically energetic pro-consul, managing to endow that unpopular Roman with more sympathy than he generally receives. FORMES resumed his old part of *Oroceco*, and, as usual, did the little he had to do characteristically and effectively.

The chorus and orchestra performed their duty manfully, only we think that Mr. COSTA detracted somewhat from the due solemnity of the rites of the Druids, by taking their hymns and marches too fast. The people who built Stonehenge would not have been likely to go about things in a hurry. The stones are too ponderous for the supposition.

PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY.—Of the third concert the *Times* reports as follows:

The selection was composed for the most part of works with which the Philharmonic orchestra is so familiar, that, under such a conductor as Mr. Costa, it would have been almost impossible for them not to go well. Haydn's symphony—No. 10 of the Saloman set of twelve, and Beethoven's No. 2—were both admirably executed. The *notturno* of Mozart, for two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, and two horns, lost half its effect by being curtailed of its first and most important movement. It opened with the *minuetto* and *trio*, in both of which Mozart's wonderful command of the resources of counterpoint is exemplified in highly ingenious forms of canon. The performance was excellent on all hands, more especially of the last movement, a kind of *air varié*, in which the oboe playing of Mr. Nicholson, and M. Baumann's unrivalled execution on the bassoon, elicited constant marks of approval. The beautiful overture (to *Lodoiska*) of Cherubini—which, at one time the rival of Kreutzer's more familiar prelude to an opera of the same name, has found a place, denied to the other, in the "classics" of the art—deserved a better position in the programme. The great feature of the concert was the overture of Mendelssohn to Victor Hugo's play of *Ruy Blas*—in vigor and brilliancy of orchestral effect equal to any of the overtures of Weber. A performance entirely up to the Philharmonic mark roused the enthusiasm of the audience, and elicited an *encore* that there was no resisting.

The trombone concerto of M. David, of Leipzig, though better than such things in general, presented little to interest beyond the clever playing of Mr. Winterbottom, who was loudly applauded. The vocal music was good enough in its way; but Madame Clara Novello being "out of voice," the duets from *Roberto* and *Fidelio*, and the hacknied air from the former, fared worse

